

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5907
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMCONSUL DURBAN POUCH
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG POUCH
AMEMBASSY GABORONE POUCH
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY MASERU POUCH
AMEMBASSY MBABANE POUCH
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SHUM, SF
SUBJ: BLACK ATTITUDES: SUMMATION AND CONCLUSIONS

REF: 76 PRETORIA 5192

1. SUMMARY: THE EIGHTEEN REPORTS WHICH COMPRIZE THE
BLACK ATTITUDES SERIES DEMONSTARTE THE MANY DIFFERENCES
AMONG SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME
HIGHLIGHTING THEIR GROWING DISSATISFACTION WITH LIFE AS
IT IS IN SOUTH AFRICA TODAY. THE RAPID ADVANCE OF BLACK
NATIONALISM TO SOUTH AFRICA'S BORDERS, COUPLED WITH LAST
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YEAR'S VIOLENT DISTURBANCES IN THE BLACK AND COLORED
TOWNSHIPS OF THE COUNTRY'S MAJOR URBAN CENTERS, STIMULATED
A NEW AND, ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUTH, RAPIDLY-SPREADING BLACK
CONSCIOUSNESS WHICH IS BEGINNING TO TRANSEND THE MANY
DIFFERENCES. LARGE NUMBERS OF BLAKCS ARE STILL FATALISTIC
AND APATHETIC WHILE THE POLITICALLY CONSCIOUS ARE DEEPLY
FRUSTRATED AND BITTER AT THEIR INABILITY TO INFLUENCE

CHANGE IN THE SYSTEM. MOST WOULD LIKE TO SEE CHANGE COME ABOUT PEACEFULLY BUT SEE LITTLE PROSPECTS UNLESS THE US AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES USE THEIR LEVERAGE WITH SAG. WITH POSSIBILITIES OF MOBILIZING THEIR STRENGTH EFFECTIVELY DENIED THEM, POLITICALLY INVOLVED BLACKS INCREASINGLY BELIEVE THAT VIOLENCE OFFERS ONLY ALTERNATIVE. WITHOUT UNDERESTIMATING THE COMBINED EFFECT OF THE ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY AND THE GENERAL PASSIVITY OF THE BLACKS ON THE ONE HAND AND TOUGH AND DETERMINED REPRESSIVE MEASURES BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE OTHER, THE POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER VIOLENCE MUST BE JUDGED CONSIDERABLE, LARGELY BECAUSE THE SAG SHOWS NO SIGN OF FLEXIBILITY. BLACKS HOPE THAT THE NEW INITIATIVES OF AMERICA AND ITS PARTNERS WILL AVOID THIS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN THE EIGHTEEN REPORTS COMPRISING THE BLACK ATTITUDES SERIES, WE HAVE EXAMINED IN SOME DETAIL THE POSITION OF BLACKS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY AND THE VIEWS OF THE MORE ARTICULATE SECTIONS OF THE BLACK POPULATION TOWARD KEY ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE UNITED STATES. THE PICTURE WHICH EMERGES IS NOT ONE OF COHESIVENESS OF PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION BUT RATHER OF UNCERTAINTY AND DIVISION. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS ONE UNIFYING FACTOR OF IMPORTANCE FOR THE FUTURE: A GROWING SENSE OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS IS REPLACING ATTITUDES OF SUBSERVIENCE AND APATHY, THE PRODUCT OF GENERATIONS OF WHITE DOMINATION AND EXPLOITATION.

3. AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE CONDITION OF BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA TODAY IS THAT A LARGE PROPORTION, MOSTLY CONFIDENTIAL

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LIVING IN HEMELANDS AND WHITE RURAL AREAS, STAND ON THE MARGIN OF POLITICAL AWARENESS. THEIR CONCERNs STILL FOCUS ON THE PROBLEMS OF DAILY EXISTENCE AND THEY ARE APATHETIC OR FATALISTIC ABOUT THEIR STATUS. BUT THIS SITUATION IS RAPIDLY CHANGING, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE YOUTH, AS EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPROVE AND RADIO AND TELEVISION CARRY A MODERNIZING MESSAGE DEEPER INTO THE HINTERLAND.

4. THE URBAN BLACK PRESENTS A QUITE DIFFERENT PICTURE. THE INDIGNITIES OF APARTHEID ARE HIS DAILY FARE. EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE MORE READILY AVAILABLE. THE CONTACT WITH THE OPULENT WHITE WORLD IS MORE DIRECT AND THEREFORE MORE VIVID AND IRRITATING. HE IS MUCH MORE CONSCIOUS THAN HIS RURAL COUSIN OF HOW MUCH THIS SOCIETY IS GEARED TO FAVOR THE WHITE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE BLACK. HENCE, HE IS MORE FRUSTRATED, MORE BITTER, AND MORE INCLINED TO REBEL AGAINST THE SYSTEM.

5. "BLACKNESS" AS A SOCIO-POLITICAL AWARENESS OF BLACK

IDENTITY IN JUXTAPOSITION TO WHITE SUPREMACY HAS NOT YET BECOME A POWERFUL UNIFYING FORCE. IT IS, HOWEVER, A CONCEPT WITH WHICH ALL BLACK PEOPLE CAN READILY IDENTIFY. IT IS MAKING SIGNIFICANT STRIDES AMONG URBAN BLACKS AND IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE IT REACHES INTO THE MORE REMOTE AREAS OF THE COUNTRY.

6. BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS AS A MOVEMENT WOULD BE FAR MORE ADVANCED TODAY IF THERE WERE LEADERS AND INSTITUTIONS CAPABLE OF CARRYING THE MESSAGE. NO ONE IS BETTER AWARE OF THIS THAN THE SAG. HENCE THE DOGMATIC EMPHASIS ON SEPARATE IDENTITY NOT ONLY BETWEEN DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS BUT ALSO BETWEEN THE TRIBAL GROUPS WHICH COMPRIZE THE BLACK POPULATION, AND THE RELENTLESS OPPOSITION TO ORGANIZATIONS WHICH CAN SERVE AS A POLITICAL BASE ON A NATIONAL SCALE. AS ROBERT SOBUKWE SO APTLY PUT IT, THE SAG IS BUSILY TRYING TO MAINTAIN TRIBALISM WHEN THE TRUST

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OF BLACK NATIONALISM ELSEWHERE IN THE CONTINENT IS TO OVERCOME SUCH DIVISIONS THROUGH MODERNIZATION. THE SUPREME IRONY, AND VULNERABILITY, OF SAG POLICY IS THAT DESPITE ALL ITS EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN "SEPARATENESS," THEY DYNAMIC OF THE WHITE-DOMINATED ECONOMY MAKES THE COUNTRY INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT ON LARGE NUMBERS OF SKILLED BLACKS.BOWDLER

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7. THE GOAL OF ORGANIZING BLACKS ON A NATIONAL SCALE
TO FORCE CHANGE FROM THE WHITE GOVERNMENT REMAINS A
GOAL OF LEADERS LIKE CHIEF GATSHA BUTHELEZI, BUT THE
PROSPECTS FOR ACHIEVING SUCH UNITY IN THE NEAR FUTURE
ARE NOT ENCOURAGING. THE DIVISIONS ARE TOO NUMEROUS.
USE OF SUCH ORGANIZATIONS AS DO EXIST--BPC, SASO/SASM,
BLACK LABOR UNIONS--IS UNLIKELY BECAUSE OF THE UNRELENTING
GOVERNMENT PRESSURE AGAINST THE LEADERSHIP OF THESE GROUPS.
THE CHURCHES AND TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS AFFORD A READY
VEHICLE FOR PROMOTION OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS. WE
ANTICIPATE GROWNING USE OF THESE CHANNELS FOR THIS PURPOSE,
BUT WE DOUBT THAT THEY COULD BE USED IN AN ACTIVIST SENSE
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WITHOUT INCURRING THE FULL FORCE OF THE SAG SECURITY
APARATUS.

8. WITH THE PROSPECTS FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE SO REMOTE,
BLACK ACTIVISTS SEE THEIR CHOICES AS LAPING BACK INTO
SULLEN TOLERANCE OR RESORTING TO VIOLENCE. IT IS HIGHLY
UNLIKELY THAT THEY WILL CHOOSE THE FIRST ALTERNATIVE
AFTER THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SOWETO RIOTS AND WITH BLACK
NATIONALISM MOVING TO SOUTH AFRICA'S FRONTIERS WITH THE
FACILITY OF DIRECT ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT. MOST
BLACKS WOULD STILL PREFER TO AVOID THE VIOLENT ALTERNATIVE.
IF THEY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY, THEY WOULD OPT FOR PEACEFUL
CHANGE AND WOULD PROBABLY ACCEPT A PERIOD OF TRANSITION
TO FULL RIGHTS IN ORDER TO AVOID BLOODSHED. BUT IF
THIS IS DENIED THEM, WE CAN ANTICIPATE (A) RENEWAL AND
POSSIBLE EXPANSION OF VIOLENCE IN THE TOWNSHIPS ARISING
FROM SPECIFIC SITUATIONS SUCH AS DETENTIONS, FORCIBLE
REMOVAL OF SQUATTERS, AND UNEMPLOYMENT, AND (B) A TURN
TO SYSTEMATIC URBAN TERRORISM AND INDUSTRIAL SABOTAGE
BY AN UNDERGROUND TRAINED AND EQUIPPED ABROAD.

9. THE GOVERNMENT IS PROCEEDING ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT
GREATER ATTENTION TO "BREAD AND BUTTER" ISSUES WILL
DEFUSE THE BITTERNESS AMONG BLACKS, I.E. THAT BY RADICALLY

INCREASING FUNDING FOR BLACK ADEUCTION, HOUSING, ELECTRIFICATION, AND FURTHER UPGRADING OF WAGES AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS, CONSERVATIVE BLACKS WOULD TAKE HOPE AND THE RADICALS WOULD FIND FEWER SYMPATHIZERS. IF THE GOVERNMENT WERE TO MAKE THE NECESSARY FINANCIAL COMMITMENT (WHICH IT HAS NOT DONE AND IS NOT LIKELY TO DO UNDER PRESENT BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS), IN THE SHORT TERM SUCH ACTION MIGHT TEMPORARILY PRODUCE SOME OF THE DESIRED EFFECT. BUT IT REPRESENTS ONLY A PALLIATIVE WHICH OVERLOOKS THE FACT THAT AT THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM IS HUMAN DIGNITY, AND NOT CREATURE COMFORTS. THE SAG APPROACH ALSO OVERLOOKS AN IMPORTANT LESSON OF HISTORY THAT REVOLUTIONS OF RISING

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EXPECTATIONS ARE GENERATED NOT BY THE MOST DEPRIVED BUT BY THOSE WHO PERCEIVE THEMSELVES TO BE MOST DEPRIVED. IT IS UNLIKELY, THEREFORE, THAT THE BLACK DEMAND FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, VOICED BY THE BETTER-EDUCATED URBAN ELEMENTS, CAN THUS BE STILLED UNLESS THE SAG WERE TO SHOW WILLINGNESS TO MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF POWER SHARING.

10. IN THE PRESENT LULL IN THE DOMESTIC STRUGGLE, MANY BLACKS AS WELL AS WHITES LOOK TO THE UNITED STATES TO TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE. WHILE WHITES POINT TO THE COMMUNIST MENACE AND HOPE FOR TIME TO DEAL WITH INTERNAL PROBLEMS IN THEIR OWN WAY, BLACKS ARE ONCE AGAIN WAITING TO SEE IF AMERICA AND ITS PARTNERS CAN AND WILL ACT IN A MANNER THAT PRODUCES NOT MERELY STATEMENTS OF SYMPATHY BUT CONCRETE CHANGES IN THE SAG'S ATTITUDE. TO DATE THEY PERCEIVE THE WEST AS SUPPORTING AND PROTECTING THE OLD ORDER. ACROSS THE BORDER THEY SEE THAT IT IS VIOLENCE, OR THE CLEAR THREAT OF IT, BACKED BY SOVIET ENCOURAGEMENT AND ARMS THAT HAS WON CHANGE FOR THE BLACK MAN. IF THE DECLARED OBJECTIVES OF THE WESTERN WORLD, HOWEVER CLEARLY AND FORCEFULLY STATED, DO NOT BRING ACTUAL CHANGE IN THEIR SITUATION, SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS WILL BECOME MORE WIDELY AND RAPIDLY CONVINCED THAT VIOLENCE IS THE ONLY ANSWER, AND WILL TURN TO THOSE WHO PROMISE TO EQUIP THEM FOR IT.

11. AS WE HAVE MENTIONED ELSEWHERE IN THIS SERIES, CONFIDENCE IS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR. ON THE BLACK SIDE, CONFIDENCE THAT A NEW DIRECTION REALLY HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED WHICH LEADS AS INEXORABLY TOWARD EQUALITY AS APARTHEID LEADS TOWARD VIOLENCE. ON THE WHITE SIDE, CONFIDENCE THAT MOVING IN A NEW DIRECTION WILL BRING NOT A SUDDEN AND OVERWHELMING SURGE OF BLACK POWER, BUT A NEW PARTNERSHIP AND STABILITY WHICH COULD HELP THIS COUNTRY REALIZE ITS TREMENDOUSLY

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RICH POTENTIAL AND GUARANTEE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN IT.

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Message Attributes

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